

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1

BALTIMORE SUN
12 MAY 1978

Proceedings short on espionage drama, long on political insight at Va. spy trial

STAT

By GILBERT A. LEWTHWAITE
Washington Bureau of The Sun

Alexandria, Va.—The spy trial of Ronald L. Humphrey and David Truong, drawing to its close here, is proving short on espionage drama but long on political insight.

Like the Vietnam war in which it has its roots, the case involves its share of good intentions and questionable actions.

It will be left to the jury, probably next week, to decide whether the two in the dock actually conspired to funnel security-damaging secrets to Vietnam during the most sensitive postwar period.

But already, with the prosecution presentation complete and the defense halfway through, it seems clear that the administration, edgy over unimportant leaks as well as disclosure of national secrets, decided that the time had come for a major security crackdown.

To break the case, the Central Intelligence Agency used telephone taps and a Vietnamese woman double-agent whose life was considered so endangered that she was given a pay boost from \$700 a month to \$1,200 and is now in protective hiding.

Actually, scant cloak and no dagger has been found in the dubious love-stricken activities of Ronald Humphrey, a mild-mannered but well-respected paper-pusher inside the United States Information Agency with a career of international service behind him.

Even administration officials cannot agree on just how damaging were the documents—usually based on press reports—that he acknowledges extracting from USIA files.

One CIA document gave this assessment: "A number of individual cables could be said at least tangentially to relate to the national defense by a Jesuit."

Mr. Humphrey has argued that he was "just leaking" information that was readily available in the public domain, but that sometimes came from newspapers not normally circulated in Washington. Among the papers he leaked were ordinary wire service reports from Asia, destined for the trash can if not his pocket, he told the jury.

In linking up with David Truong, a high-profile Vietnamese expatriate "peacenik" here, Mr. Humphrey sought,

he says, to promote the postwar reconciliation between the United States and Vietnam in the hope of securing the release of his "fiancee," known as Kim, and her five children.

He met Kim in Vietnam during the war when they were neighbors.

In 1969 she warned him of a local Viet Cong ambush. He then skipped a mission in which two Vietnamese soldiers were blown up. Now, he has told the jury, he owes her his life. Separated but still not divorced from an American wife—"procrastination," he says—he refers constantly to Kim and her children as "my family."

Today she sits passively in the front row of the public gallery of the U.S. District Court here, her black hair cascading down her bright floral native costume known as an ao-dai, a colorful counterpoint in the somber courtroom as the man who secured her freedom from the Communists now fights for his own.

It is the kernel of the prosecution's case that the price of her presence at his side today was Mr. Humphrey's treachery yesterday.

But in a twist to show that even his desperation for her company had its limits, his defense has produced the fact that he informed the FBI of suspicious approaches he received from a Soviet journalist who was eventually expelled as a spy.

Given the Soviet influence in Vietnam, surely, argued the defense, he would quickly have exploited the journalist's approaches for Kim's sake had he been willing to spy.

Certainly there is no argument from either side that his desire to see Kim again was little short of an obsession, making him a familiar figure or caller at the State Department and on Capitol Hill.

He managed to get Senator George S. McGovern (D., S.D.) to write a personal letter on Kim's behalf in 1976 to Xuan Thuy, chairman of the powerful Foreign Policy Commission in Vietnam and previously deputy to Le Duc Tho at the Paris peace talks. Senator McGovern had met Xuan Thuy twice. "This is the only case that I have been able to determine that he [Mr. McGovern] wrote to Xuan Thuy as opposed to the Vietnamese ambassador in Paris," John D. Holum, the senator's legislative aide, told the jury.

In the words of Frank A. Sieverts, the deputy assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs, Mr. Humphrey was a man "almost driven" in his determination to be reunited with Kim.

"It is almost an American characteristic of hope springing eternal and wanting to make this happen by using all the means he could," said Mr. Sieverts, adding, "He was certainly very resourceful and persevering in these efforts." Among these was his "rather impressive" success at persuading the Swedish government to intercede on Kim's behalf.

It was his anxiety that put him into original contact with David Truong, scion of a Saigon politician and active peace lobbyist here.

They claim their joint interest in promoting normal relations with Vietnam led to the transfer of information on developments from USIA files.

Mr. Humphrey has said he realized he was risking "administrative sanctions" and possibly dismissal—though not trial for espionage—but felt such risk was worth taking for his romantic crusade.

According to the prosecution, Mr. Truong, whom they allege was a Communist agent, forwarded the documents he received to Hanoi's embassy in Paris.

The courier reportedly was Dung Kwall, Vietnamese wife of a U.S. naval aviator and CIA double-agent who was "targeted" on Vietnamese Communists in Paris, including visiting Prime Minister Pham Van Dong. In an effort to discredit her testimony, Michael Tigar, Mr. Truong's defense attorney, called as a reluctant witness the CIA officer who recruited her in Honolulu and controlled her operations for two years. He wanted the details of her demand for a wage increase, reflecting a monetary motivation that she earlier denied.

In another effort to refute an administration assertion that independent conduits are not used by the State Department in its practice of diplomacy, the defense also called Daniel Porter, a peace activist and authority on Vietnamese policy, to recount his semi-official contacts with the Vietnamese.

CONTINUED

STAT